LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION
of the
City of New York

DRAFT Feb. 8, 77

BROOKLYN SURVEY

VANDERBILT AVENUE
PROPOSED HISTORIC DISTRICT

Abraham D. Beame, Mayor
City of New York

Beverly Moss Spatt, Chairman
Landmarks Preservation Commission

305 Broadway, New York, New York 10007
Telephone: (212) 566-7577

VANDERBILT AVENUE - GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Located in the two rows of blocks to the south of the Brooklyn Navy Yard, within Community Board No. 2 (as of December, 1976), this neighborhood exudes an air of activity.

Three of its four boundaries are major traffic arteries - Flushing Avenue on the north, Myrtle Avenue of the south, and Carlton Avenue, on the west, with only its eastern end tapering off gradually with local streets such as Hall Street, Ryerson Street, Grand Avenue, and Steuben Street. Therefore the neighborhood is physically as well as psychologically confined by streams of heavy traffic flow.

This feeling of place is further augmented by a change in scale on two sides, with the Navy Yard buildings to its north, and Walt Whitman Houses to its west. The heavy commercialism of Myrtle Avenue interrupts the residential atmosphere that is restated, in different architectural terms, in the Fort Greene area south of Myrtle Avenue. The Brooklyn Queens Expressway, an elevated highway, bisects the area laterally, and any doubt about the eastern end of the area is resolved as the BQE makes a sharp turn northward at Grand Avenue and Steuben Street and crosses Flushing Avenue, thus serving as a physical barrier at the neighborhood eastern end.

The northern row of blocks, from Flushing Avenue south to Park Avenue (the grade street below the elevated BQE), still retains small remnants of residential

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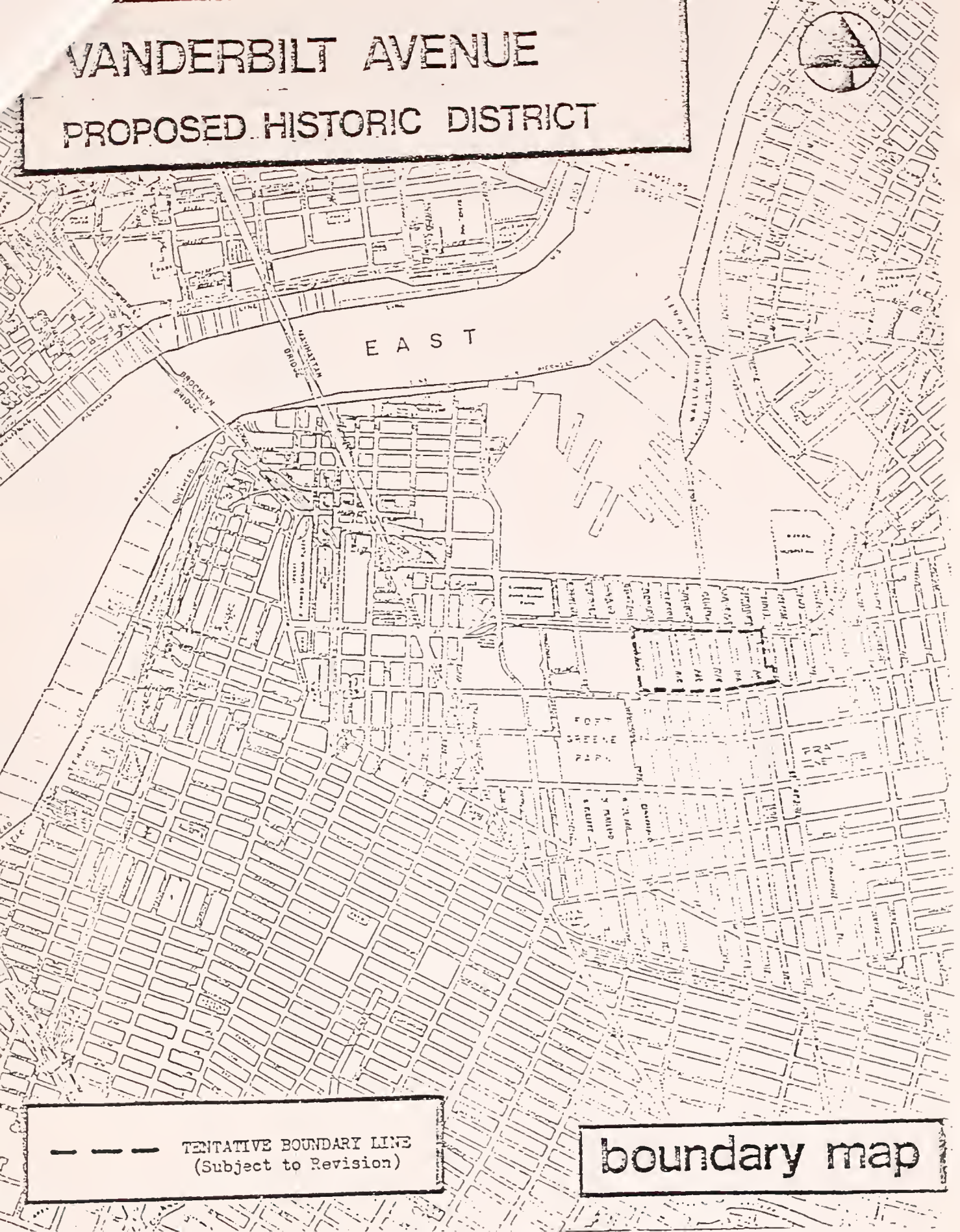
buildings and a fine church and rectory but it contains primarily a mixture of Nineteenth and Twentieth Century industrial buildings. Several of the nineteenth century buildings possess considerable individual significance. The row of blocks from Park Avenue south to Myrtle Avenue presents a residential aspect, with a few commercial intrusions. Five streets, the eastern side of Carlton, both sides of Adelphi, Clermont, Vanderbilt and Clinton, contain an inordinate amount of early frame structures, while Waverly, Washington and a portion of Hall are notable for containing examples of almost every architectural style and building material used throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

There are several unoccupied buildings in the area, all of which are sealed and not open to the elements. All buildings show signs of maintenance, from minimal washing of windows and painting of wooden elements to virtual restorations such as 73 Vanderbilt Avenue. There appears to be an awareness, at least among a portion of the residents, of the desirability of maintenance compatible with the original or early aspect of the building. This trend could be strengthened since neighborhood stability and prevention of economic deterioration are paramount concerns.

VANDERBILT AVENUE

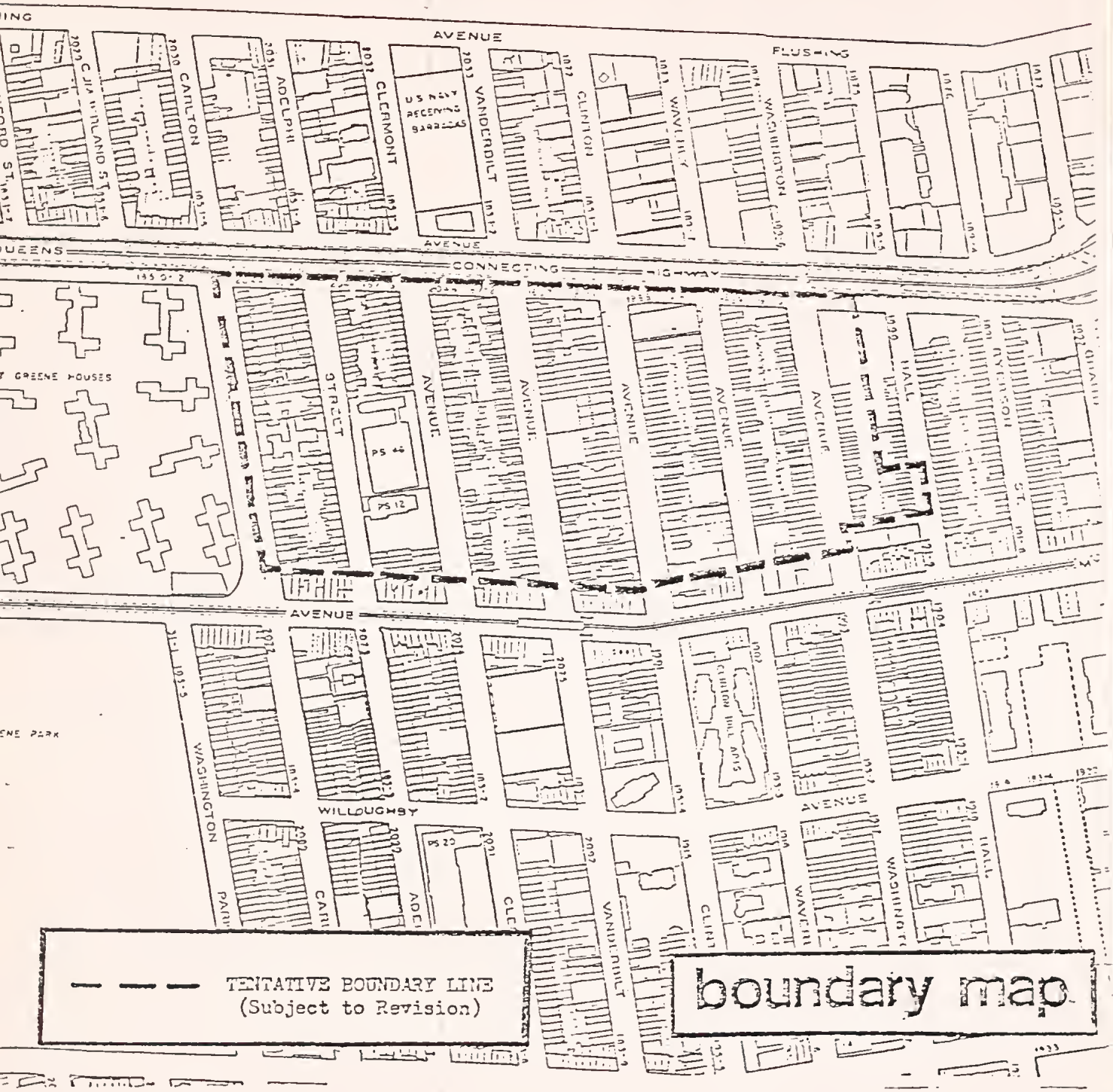
PROPOSED HISTORIC DISTRICT



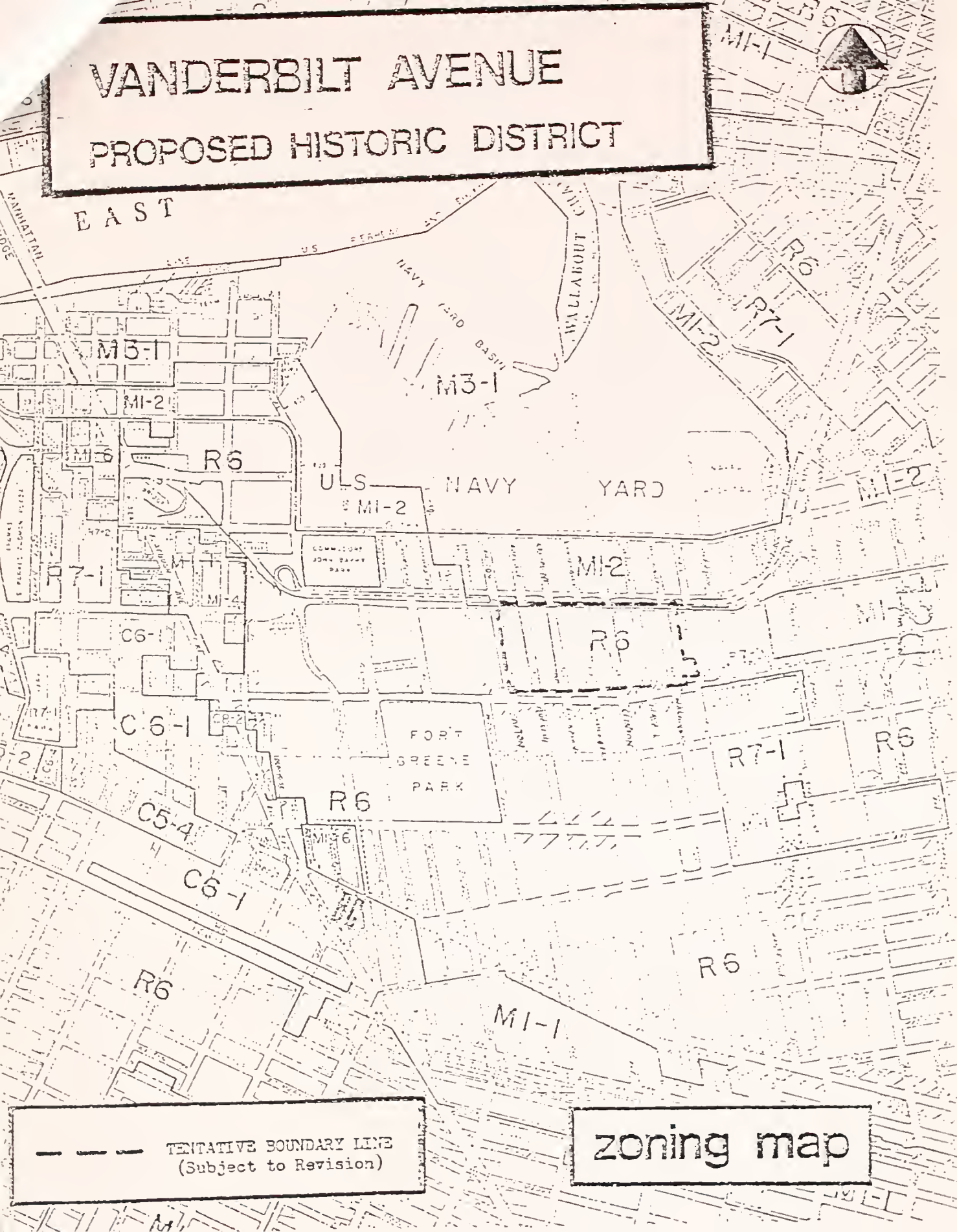
— — — TENTATIVE BOUNDARY LINE
(Subject to Revision)

boundary map

VANDERBILT AVENUE
PROPOSED HISTORIC DISTRICT



boundary map


VANDERBILT AVENUE
PROPOSED HISTORIC DISTRICT
EAST
NAVY YARD BASIN
WALLABOUT
M3-1
M1-2
R6
R7-1
U.S. NAVY YARD
M1-2
M1-2
R6
C6-1
C6-1
FORT GREENE PARK
R6
R7-1
R6
C5-4
C6-1
R6
R6
M1-1
TENTATIVE BOUNDARY LINE
(Subject to Revision)
zoning map

VANDERBILT AVENUE - COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION

In the Vanderbilt Avenue study area there is an ethnically diverse, well integrated community of working-class and lower-middle-class families.

Neighborhood residents have shown their commitment to stabilizing and developing the residential character of their community by acting in an informal way to find buyers for houses on their blocks when owners were unable to meet mortgage and other costs. In some cases they had to search city records to find owners or mortgages, do clean-up work, and then locate prospective buyers. Since 1971, 18 of the 50 houses on Vanderbilt Avenue have been sold.

VANDERBILT AVENUE - HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

When white men first arrived in the New World, and indeed for an additional two hundred years after, the Wallabout (originally Waal-Bogt) was the westernmost of the terminal moraine inlets that punctuate most of Long Island's north shore. The general configuration is that of a relatively small cove, flanked by low hills to its east and west, and changing gradually at its southern end from water to mud flats to marshland and salt meadow, before merging with high, dry ground.

With the single exception of the Amersfoort (Flatlands) purchases, the earliest purchase in the present County of Brooklyn was that of Joris Jansen De Rapalie, who purchased land in the Waal-Bogt from the Indians in 1637. Within a few years all the land surrounding the Wallabout was purchased or granted. Starting at the northwest corner of the Wallabout, and going counterclockwise, the holdings consisted of:

Edward Piscock, land granted April 2, 1637

Hans Lodewyck, land granted November 3, 1645

Michael Picet - this grant passed February 13, 1645 to William Cornelissen, then to Charles Gabrey, then Michael Heynell, Dirk Jansen and Jeronimus Rapalie

Peter Caesar Italien, also called Caesar Alberti, grants June 17, 1643 and May 1, 1647. This tract was bounded north by Wallabout Bay, west by North Elliot Place, south by DeKalb Avenue, and east by Carlton

Avenue. After his death in 1655, his holdings were gradually sold off, much of it eventually becoming the property of the Couwenhoven family and John Jackson

Peter Montfort, land granted May 29, 1641

Jan Montfort (probably Peter's brother) land granted May 29, 1641

Joris Jansen De Rapalie, mentioned before, purchased land June 16, 1673. This tract contains the site of the Naval Hospital and the land between Grand and Nostrand Avenues.

Thus, by the mid seventeenth century the area was established as one of Dutch Plantations, and though names and property lines changes through sales and inheritances, it retained essentially the same character into the opening decades of the nineteenth century. The area originally comprising the two Montfort properties appears on the J.H. Beers and Co. Farm Line Map as being, from west to east the farms of Post, John Ryerson, Jeremiah V. Spader, and John Spader.

The major development area within the Town of Brooklyn was in the area of the Ferry and the Heights, nearest to Manhattan, and when the Village was incorporated in 1827 following the 1818 survey, the eastern boundary terminated at the southwestern corner of Wallabout Bay. By this time, Brooklyn Village was predominantly mercantile in nature, populated largely by settlers of English descent, while the Wallabout retained its Dutch farm aspect.

The event that was to be the catalyst for change and growth in the area was the creation of the Brooklyn Navy Yard.

Land that was a portion of the Remsen estate was purchased in 1781 by John Jackson and his brother Samuel. With their sale of this property, February 7, 1801 to the United States government the westernmost portion of the present Navy Yard was created. A government purchase in 1824 from the widow and other

heirs of Martin Schenck gave the United States 35 acres of land for $7,650.00. This is the site of the hospital complex. With the purchase, August 14, 1848, for $285,000.00 from Frederick and Catherine Griff, the Federal government acquired the land between its two former purchases. This third parcel was bound on the north by low water mark and on the south by Flushing Avenue.

High water mark then extended in a roughly circular line as far as the foot of Sands Street. From Sands Street, along the present Navy Yard, as far as Flushing Avenue, thence as far as Clinton Avenue, extending into the present City (Commodore John Barry) park, was a large mill pond, empty at low water. From there, along Flushing Avenue to the Hospital Hill, down the bay and near the line of Washington Avenue, there was no solid ground.

Although created in 1801, the Navy Yard remained mainly unimproved until the war of 1812-14. During that period, the yard was active, and continued to grow during the second quarter of the nineteenth century. For example, the fence was erected in 1827, the Lyceum from 1833-39 and the Stone Dry Dock was started 1841 and completed 1951.

This period of Navy Yard activity was parallelled by activity in the Vanderbilt Avenue area. Listed chronologically, it includes:

1833 - John Spader farm sold. Clinton Avenue was laid out lengthwise through it from the East River (Wallabout) to Jamaica Road. The land on either side of this street was sold in half acre lots.

1835 - Myrtle Avenue was paved from the City Hall to Nostrand Avenue, Flushing Avenue was paved from the hospital to Bedford Avenue, also Skillman Street, Bedford, Franklin and Kent Avenues were paved from Flushing Avenue to Myrtle Avenue and Classon Avenue was paved from Flushing Avenue to Willoughby Avenue.

1839 - The City of Brooklyn mapped Fort Greene into a grid pattern which

designated streets leading from downtown and streets like Cumberland, Carlton and Adelphi, which extended from the Navy Yard, had been cut through.

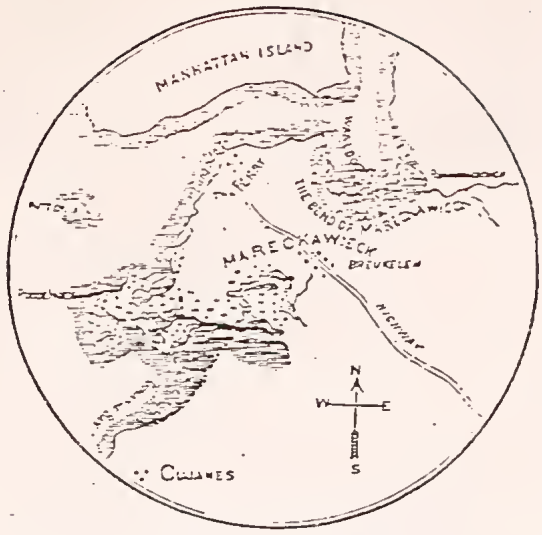
1840's - Fort Greene (then called East Brooklyn) had a built up working class area at its northern end. East and south it was still farmland, and to its west was Downtown Brooklyn.

1855 - William Perris real estate map shows the area north of Myrtle Avenue as densely settled by working class people such as laborers, servants, carpenters, masons, and hatters.

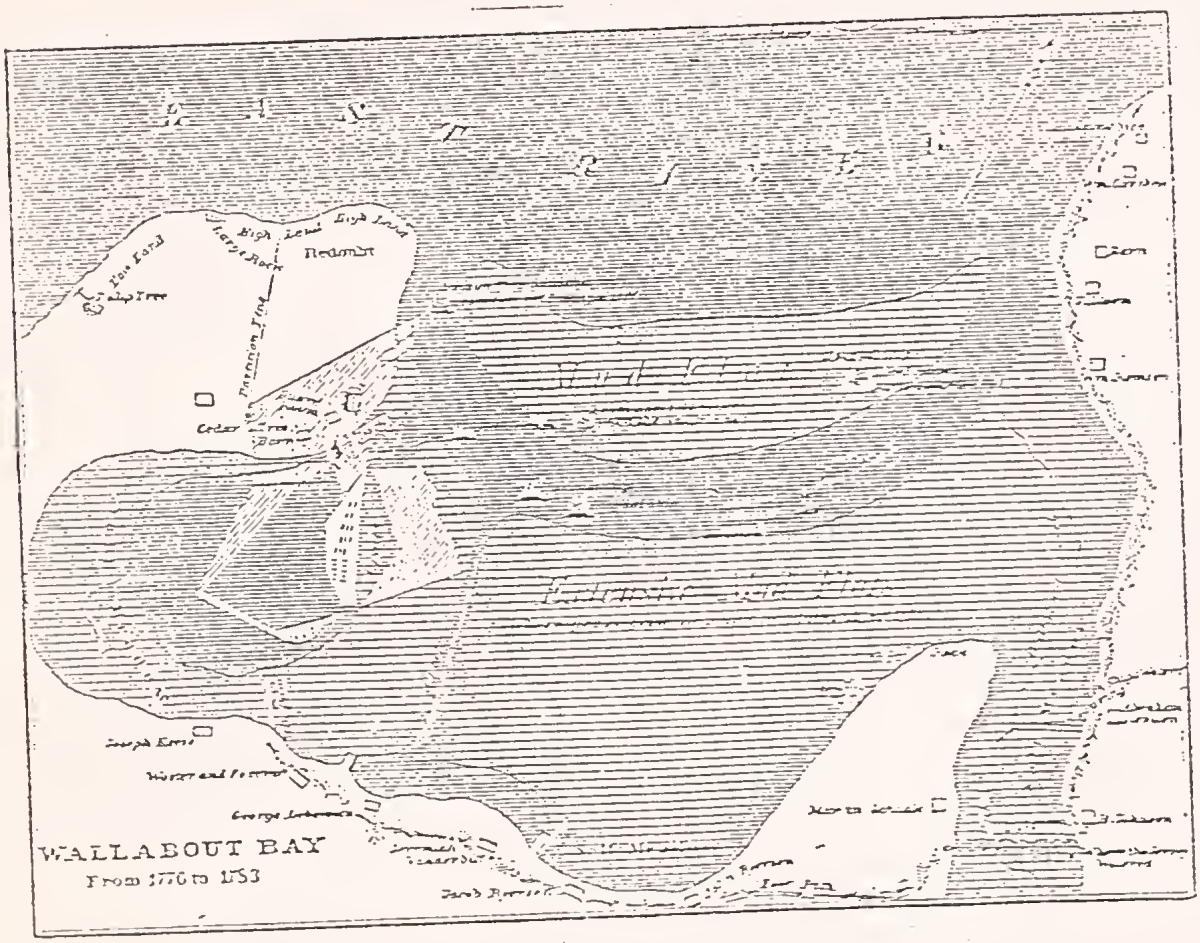
The development of the Vanderbilt Avenue section is linked closely with the Navy Yard. The portion contained within Park Avenue to Myrtle Avenue, Carlton Avenue to Clinton Avenue grew in the 1820-65 period. Directly to the east of this section, on Waverly Avenue, Washington Avenue, and Hall Street, the growth was related more to the 1870-1890 period, and probably owes its origins not only to the Navy Yard, but to the later nineteenth century industrial development on Flushing Avenue at this point and, to a lesser extent, to a Fort Greene "spill over."

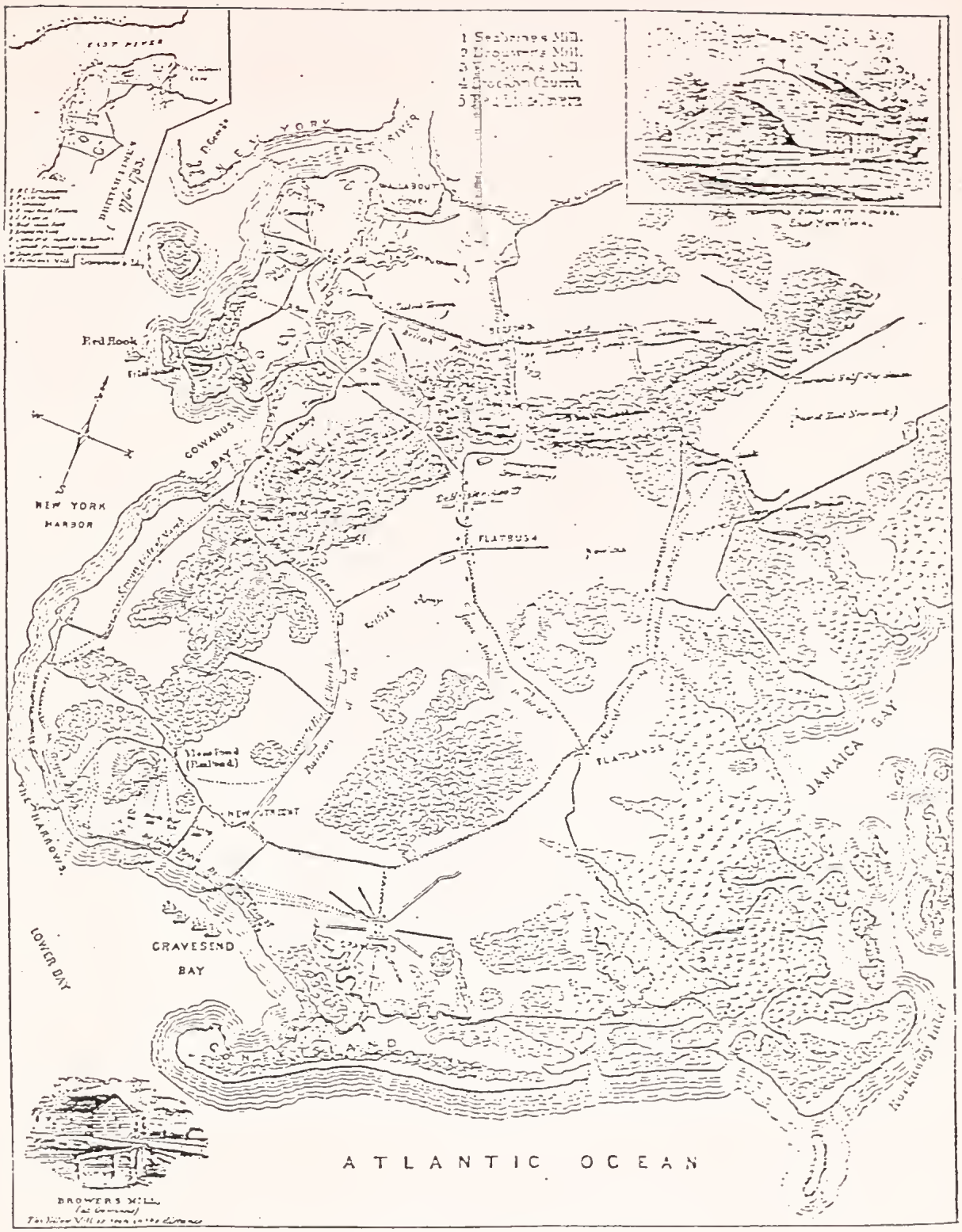
New buildings files, giving architects, developers, and owners names are available for this later section. Architects such as Louis Berger, Benjamin Finkensieper, Geo. P. Chappell, Chappell & Bosworth, T. Floyd Thomas, C.B. Sheldon, Geo. Graham, Parfitt Bros. Wm. Taylor appear, all connected with buildings erected within the 1880-1910 time period.

The area might be considered a compendium of vernacular expressions of several architectural styles-Federal, Greek Revival, Victorian Gothic and Italianate.

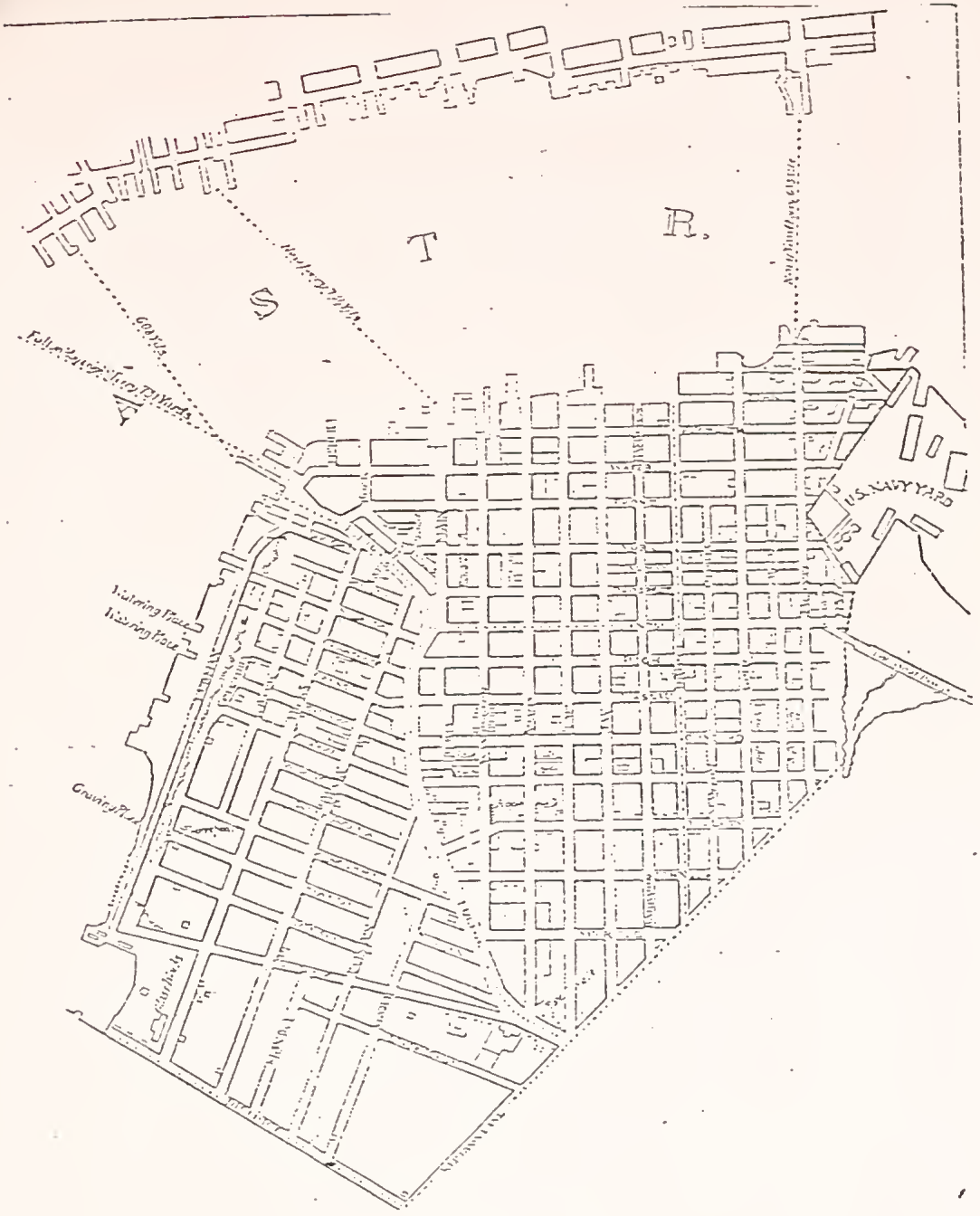


MAP SHOWING THE RELATIVE POSITIONS OF THE VILLAGE OF BRUCKELEN AND ITS ADJACENT SETTLEMENTS, IN 1946.





MAP OF THE BATTLE OF BROOKLYN, AUGUST 27, 1776.



BROOKLYN VILLAGE IN 1827

Redrawn from William Hooker's New Pocket Plan. Courtesy of the Long Island Historical Society

VANDERBILT AVENUE - ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

Federal Style - The particular expression of this style which is found frequently in this area is the free standing, frame structure with peaked roof with the gabled end at right angles to the street. These structures are two stories high and three bays wide with the entrance door in one of the end bays. Occasionally, they are found with one story porches extending across the front, added at a later date. Almost invariably, they have been resided. No. 143-145 Vanderbilt Avenue is an example of two attached houses of this style. No. 69 and 71 show alterations to the roof line, No. 73 is a two and one half story variant on the style, No. 76 is resided in early novelty shingling, while No. 78 is resided in asphalt imitation stone and has an enclosed front porch. No. 106 is four bays wide, the northernmost bay being a flat roofed two story extension over an alleyway. This basic style continued for many years, into the 1850's and many Vanderbilt Avenue examples are transitional with Greek Revival details.

Greek Revival Style

No. 136 Clinton Avenue is one of the more notable structures in the area. This is a two story, three bay, temple front house. The shallow gable end faces the street and contains a returned pediment carried on four two story piers, forming a verandah. The house has flanking one story set back additions on both sides. The entire structure, including the piers and the pediment, are covered with asphalt siding.

Gothic Revival Style

Nos. 92-96 Vanderbilt Avenue are three frame houses built in the early 1850's and reminiscent of the Gothic Revival. The three-bay facades are three stories high above a low brick basement. The facades of Nos. 94 and 96 have a high-pitched gable in the center, while a small ogive window has survived in the gable end of No. 92. No. 96 has a greatly extended third floor with a more recent cornice of c. 1875-1880 as crowning feature.

The doorways have lost their original detailing. No. 92 has a small porch roof carried on brackets while the ones of Nos. 94 and 96 are of recent date. No trim surrounding the windows remains.

Nos. 117-121 Vanderbilt Avenue are three Gothic Revival brick rowhouses with a height of two stories and attic above a high basement. The two-bay fronts of Nos. 117 and 121 have bay windows extending over basement and first floor, while No. 119 has the more usual three-bay facade. All openings, except for the basements and for No. 121, have molded window hoods, so typical for the Gothic Revival. Over the bay windows occur high-pitched gables, of which No. 117 has retained the original elaborate barge boards. Beneath the corrice, which exists between the gables, is a frieze with a quatrefoil pattern occasionally interrupted by small attic windows.

These exceptional houses were constructed in the early 1850's and sold in 1853 by Roswell Hovey, a speculator. George Sisco, a pilot, acquired in that year No. 117; James Miller, another pilot, No. 119; and Ira Todd, No. 121.

Nos. 123-125 Vanderbilt Avenue are similar in design to Nos. 117-121 and built at a somewhat later date. The two-bay brick fronts of a two-story height above a high basement have one bay with double windows, and an arched window in the gable crowning the bay. In the slightly-recessed entrance bay another arched window occurs on the second floor beneath the simple boxgutter connecting

the gables. At No. 125, double windows in the first floor have retained all original detail including the sashes.

Both houses were sold by the speculator Roswell Hovey, who was responsible for the construction in 1854. William A. Lawson acquired both houses.

Italianate Style

Nos. 127-135 Vanderbilt Avenue are three brick residences, Italianate in style, with a height of three stories above a basement and a width of three bays. One-story porches with simple wooden supports and connecting flat arches, somewhat reminiscent of the Gothic Revival, extend over the full width of each house. While the first floor openings have fully-arched windows, the remaining openings have low arches, except for the third floor windows of No. 131, which were probably altered. Molded frames surround the openings of the two upper floors. Brackets supporting the cornice extend over the arched frieze and its row of dentils.

Richard Seckerson, a builder, constructed both houses. In 1854, he sold No. 127 to Charles S. Sperry, a New York City clockmaker. No. 131, similar in appearance but of a slightly different height, was probably built by Miles O. Pettet, who sold the house in 1854 to Emmanuel B. Pike, a merchant.

Nos. 137-139 Vanderbilt Avenue are two simple brick houses. The Italianate facades, three bays wide, have three stories above a high basement. Small brackets carry molded stone lintels over the doorway while the window openings have plain stone lintels. No. 139 has retained its original double doors but the first floor French windows have been altered. The brackets supporting the cornice extend over a panelled frieze.

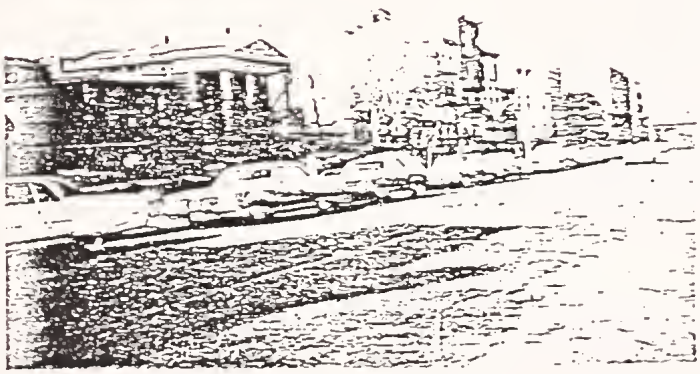
Neo-Grec Style

Nos. 80-86 Vanderbilt Avenue is a nice row of five--three is a No. 82½--brownstone residences, each two bays wide and three stories in height above the

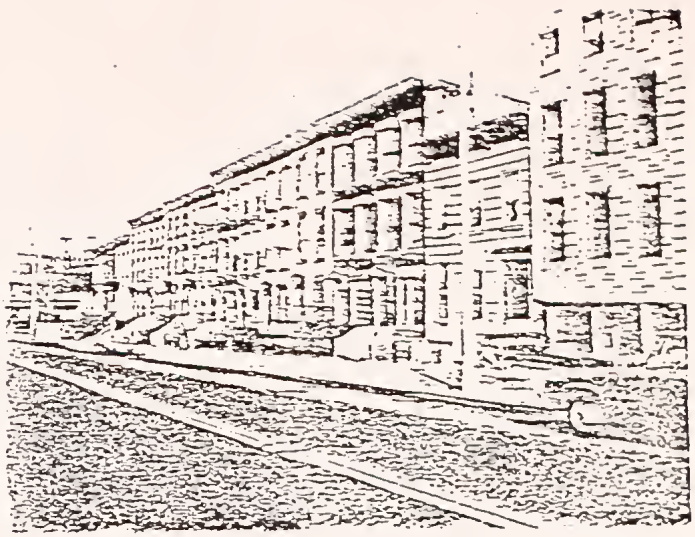
low basement. The doorways have pilasters with brackets at either side supporting a molded lintel. The brackets are neo-Grec in appearance. The first floor windows have triangular-shape molded lintels, while the second floor openings have a molded lintel and the ones of the third floor are plain. The separate cornices are supported by brackets somewhat neo-Grec in character, which extend over a plain frieze and its row of dentils.

In 1878, these five houses were erected for Charles Pratt, who lived at Clinton Avenue, near Willoughby Avenue, in this district. Pratt, of course, was extremely influential in the development of the nearby Pratt Institute. The designs were prepared by E. L. Robert of 157 Broadway, New York City, architect, and executed by the mason, Thomas Gibsons, and the carpenter, George G. Chapman.

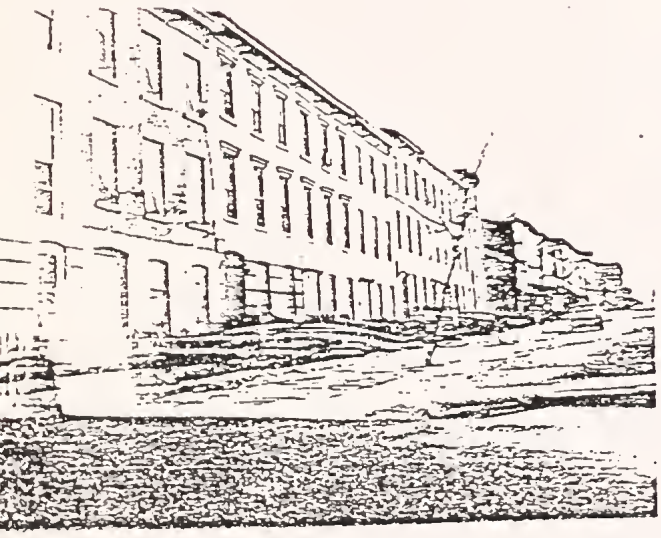
VANDERBILT AVENUE



CLINTON AVENUE



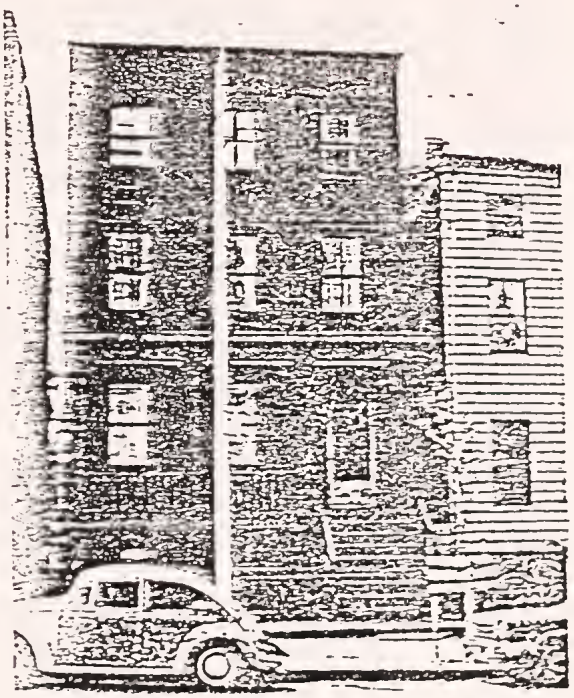
WASHINGTON AVENUE



WAVERLY AVENUE

75 VANDERBILT AVE.

143-145 VANDERBILT AVE.



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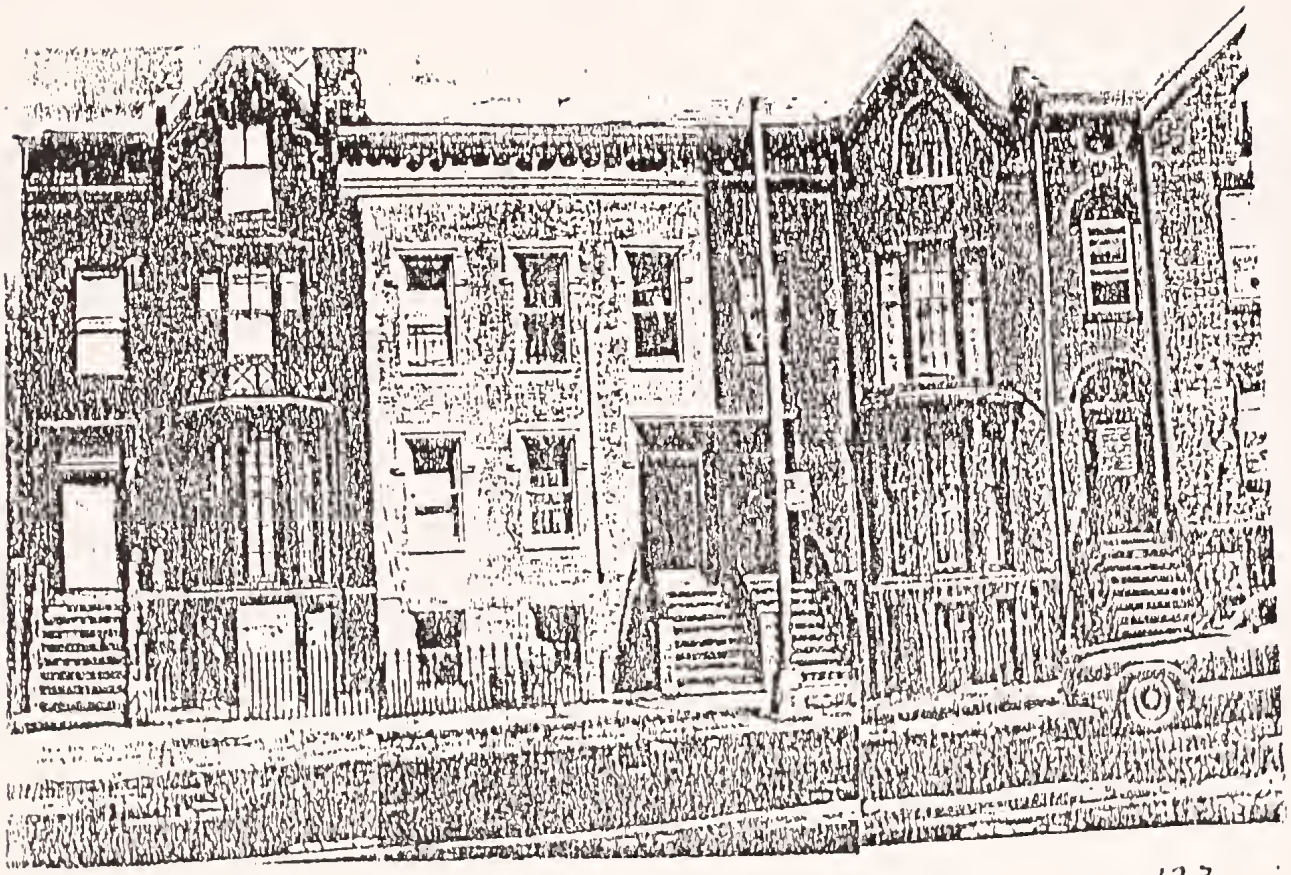

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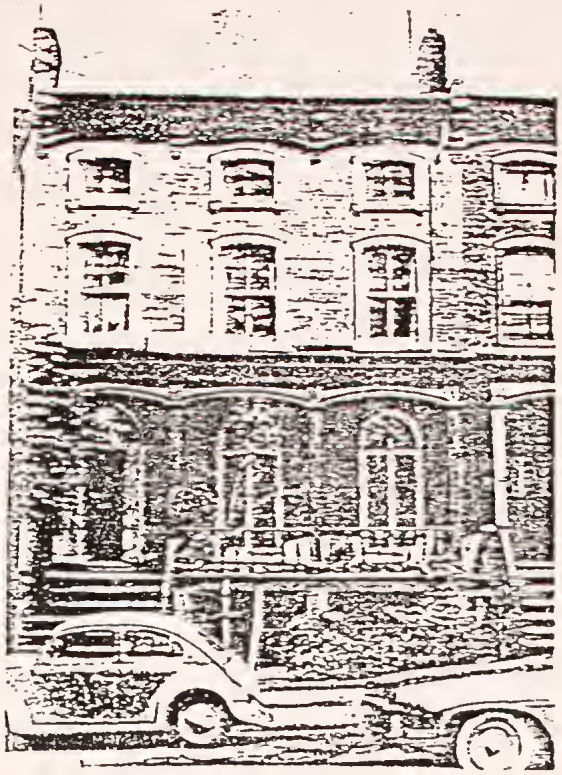
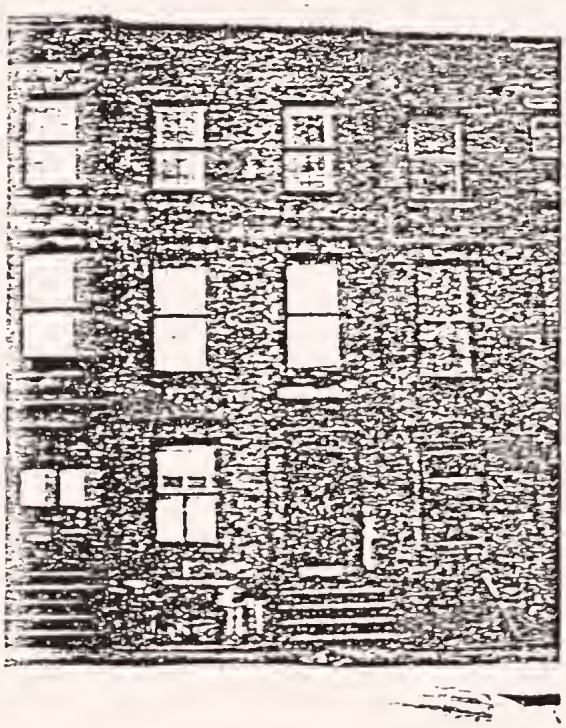
VANDERBILT AVE.



ITALIAN STYLE

127 VANDERBILT AVE.

NEO GREC



82 ½ VANDERBILT AVE.

VANDERBILT AVENUE - BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Fitch, Fein, Gilman, Simon, Lockwood and Prudhon. A Proposal for the Designation of Fort Greene as an Historic District, Privately Printed: 1973

Stiles, Henry R., ed. A History of Kings County Including the City of Brooklyn, Volume I, New York: W. W. Munsell & Co.: 1884

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Director of Preservation

Prepared by the Community Development Staff

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Project Supervisor

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Luella Boddewyn - Field and Community Research
Mary Dierickx - Field and Records Research, Graphic Preparation
James Dillon - Field and Records Research
Andrew Dolkart - Field Research, Photography
Sarah Landau (former staff member) - Field Research
Gloria McDarrah - Community Research, Description
Karen Vaughan - Community and Planning Research, Description, Photography

Vanderbilt Avenue - Appendix

Community Groups

Fort Greene Landmarks Preservation Committee
37 So. Portland
Brooklyn, N. Y.
Ruth Goldstein

Fort Greene Community Corp.
205 Ashland Place
Brooklyn, N. Y.
Patrick McLauren Dougal, Director 834-7500

Friends of Fort Greene Park
269 Cumberland Street
Brooklyn, N. Y. 11217

Fort Greene Youth Patrol
137 Myrtle Avenue
Brooklyn, N. Y.
Ed Carter, Director

Greater Fort Greene Coordinating Council
549 Myrtle Avenue
Brooklyn, N. Y.
Dr. Emile Curry, Executive Director

Fort Greene Unity Committee
P.O. Box 33
Brooklyn, N. Y. 11205
Joel Saint - Cyr

Vanderbilt Avenue

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New York, N. Y. 10017 — 972-9500

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147 Montague Street
Brooklyn, N. Y. 11201 — 522-7121

State Senator
#25 Carol Bellamy (D-L)
157 Remsen Street
Brooklyn, N. Y. 11201 — 625-1031

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253 Broadway
New York, N. Y. 10007 — 233-0763

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Borough Hall
Brooklyn, N. Y. -1201 — 643-2054

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City Council
City Hall
New York, N. Y. 10007 — 566-0719

City Services

Community Planning Board #2
(as of December 1976)

Reverend Walter C. Murphy, Chairman
Sacred Heart Church
41 Adelphi Street
Brooklyn, N. Y. 11205 625-5115

Brooklyn Office of the Department of City Planning
195 Montague Street, 7th Floor
Brooklyn, N. Y. 11201
Victor L'Eplatnier, Planner 834-0875

Vanderbilt Avenue

Vanderbilt Avenue - Sanitation

Sanitation Garage No. 33
15 Second Avenue
Brooklyn, N. Y.
Edward Pascucci, District Superintendent 624-7113

Library

Walt Whitman Branch
93 Street Edwards Street
Brooklyn, N. Y.
Marvin Longton, Head Librarian 855-1503

Police and Fire Departments

Fire
Engine 210
Rescue Company #2
160 Carlton Avenue
Brooklyn, N. Y.
Junius P. Rahn, Captain

Police
88th Precinct
298 Classon Avenue
Brooklyn, N. Y.
James McKenna, Community Relations
Emile Dufau, Officers 636-6511

Vanderbilt Avenue

District Health Center

Fort Greene D.H.C.
295 Flatbush Avenue Extension
Brooklyn, N. Y. 11201
Seymour Manoff, Director — 643-8934

C.H.S. Whitman Ingersoll Houses
132 Carlton Avenue
Brooklyn, N. Y. 11205
Elma Tamar, Nurse-in-Charge — 875-3422

Health Care Facilities

Cumberland Hospital
39 Auburn Place
Brooklyn, N. Y. 11205
Inder Persand, Executive Director — MA 5-1800

Brooklyn Hospital
121 DeKalb Avenue
Brooklyn, N. Y. 11201
Robert Markowitz, Executive Director — 270-4400

Vanderbilt Avenue

Bank Information

Citibank NA
Clinton Avenue at Myrtle Avenue
Brooklyn, N. Y.
Mr. Leo Mellow 875-3543

Prudential Savings Bank
Myrtle Avenue at Clinton Avenue
Brooklyn, N. Y.
Mrs. Florence Raskopf, Branch Manager UL 5-7600

Vanderbilt Avenue

School Information

P.S. 46
100 Clermont Avenue, Brooklyn, N. Y.
Barry Finkelman, Principal 834-6748

JHS 265
101 Park Avenue
Brooklyn, N. Y.
Philip Cox, Principal 834-6760

Gilbert School
81 Willoughby Street
Brooklyn, N. Y.
Mr. Harold Gilbert 852-8825

Fort Greene Catholic
38 Adelphi Street
Brooklyn, N. Y. 11205
Sister Marianne Shehann 624-6960

St. Angela Hall Academy
292 Washington Avenue
Brooklyn, N. Y.
Sister Marie de Montfort
Sister Clara Santoro 622-9200

School District 13
44 Court Street
Brooklyn, N. Y.
Dr. J. Jerome Harris, Superintendent 834-6700
Mrs. Wilma Maynard, Chairman, School Board

Vanderbilt Avenue

Religious Institutions

Sacred Heart Church
41 Adelphi Street
Brooklyn, N. Y.
Father Walter Murphy — MA 5-5115

Institutional Church of God in Christ, Inc.
170 Adelphi Street
Brooklyn, N. Y.
Rev. Carl Williams — MA 5-9175

Rugged Cross Baptist Church
262 Vanderbilt Avenue
Brooklyn, N. Y.